



# KICKOFF FUNDAMENTALS, DRILLS, AND SCHEME

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# COURSE CONTENTS

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- Coverage principles
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# PHILOSOPHY

- **Always a “momentum” play**
  - **Start of a half or after a score**
  - **Biggest exchanges of yardage happen on KO / KOR plays**
    - **Opportunity to be really good or really bad**
- **First play of the defensive series**
  - **Set the table**
  - **All defensive starters (other than DTs) start on either kickoff or punt**
- **Coverage units are the easiest way to lose a game**



# KICKOFF GOAL

- Our goal in each game is to have the opponent average starting field position inside the 25
- To accomplish our goal:
  - Get great kick location and hang time. Shoot for the top of the numbers with 3.75 hang time.
  - Present difficult looks to make our jobs easier and the opponent's job harder
  - Take the line and close space in the speed zone
  - Read the return and make great decisions in the avoid zone
  - Finish aggressively at the ball and make the tackle inside the 25

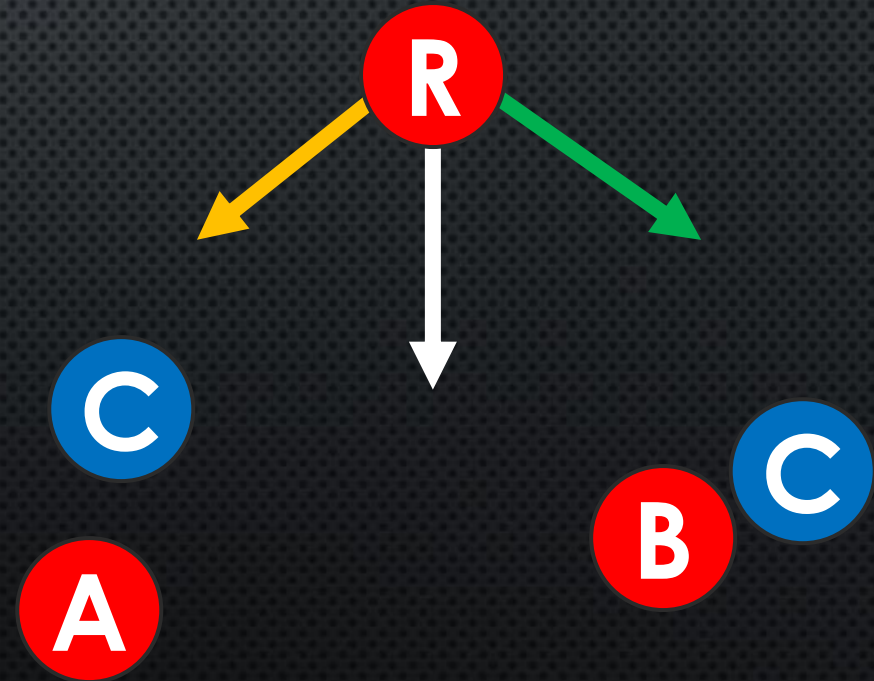
# COVERAGE PRINCIPLES (KO/PUNT)

- Find the returner, do not look up at the ball
- Close the space
  - Cover as much ground as fast as possible to close the space between yourself and the ball
- Do not follow color
  - Do not follow a teammate who is in the same coverage wave as you
- Blockers: avoid early, run through late
  - Avoid and re-stack (“cut the string”)
  - Run through late when you don’t have time/space to avoid
- Keep the ball inside and in front
  - Do not lose shoulder leverage
  - Do not run off the cliff



# LEVERAGE = ADVANTAGE

- Coverage players want to keep the ball inside and in front
  - Inside = proper shoulder leverage
  - In front = don't run off the cliff
- Return players want to get leverage on their man relative to the return alley
- Know what leverage you need!
  - If you have it – keep it
  - If you don't have it – get it



# "THE CLIFF"

- Coverage player: do not run past the level of the ball
- Return player: we are often trying to run our man off the cliff, particularly on punt returns
- The cliff comes more quickly on shorter kicks



# TIME AND SPACE

- Coverage players are on a clock – they cannot waste time. Avoid “friction” with blockers.
- Coverage players must close the space to the ball.
- Return players are trying to waste the cover man’s time. Occupy his space by creating “friction.” Keep or create space for the returner.

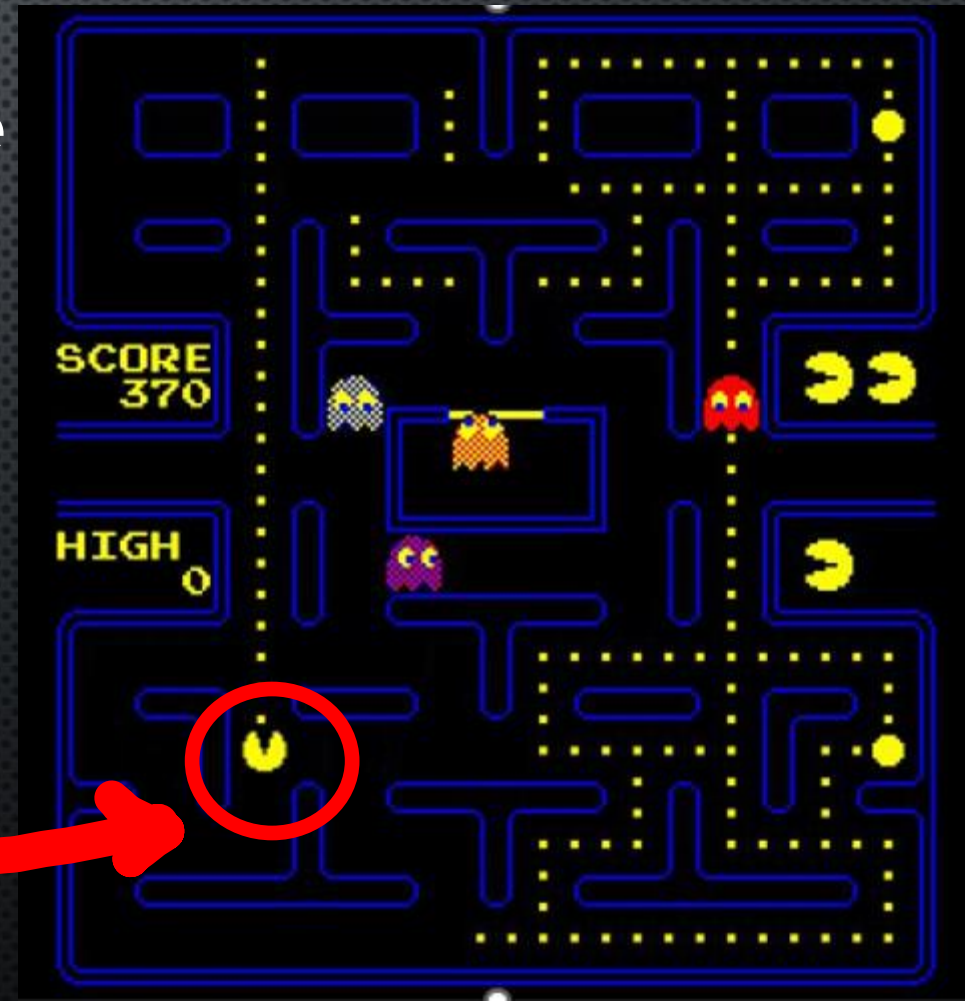




# STOP VERTICAL RETURN / GET VERTICAL

- Coverage principle: we need to stop the vertical return and make the ballcarrier run sideways or reset his feet. The hawks on punt and missile on kickoff are specifically responsible for stopping the vertical return. While the ballcarrier is stationary/lateral, the rest of the cover unit is closing the space.
- Returner principle: get vertical! You are Pac-Man in the maze and all the points are straight ahead!

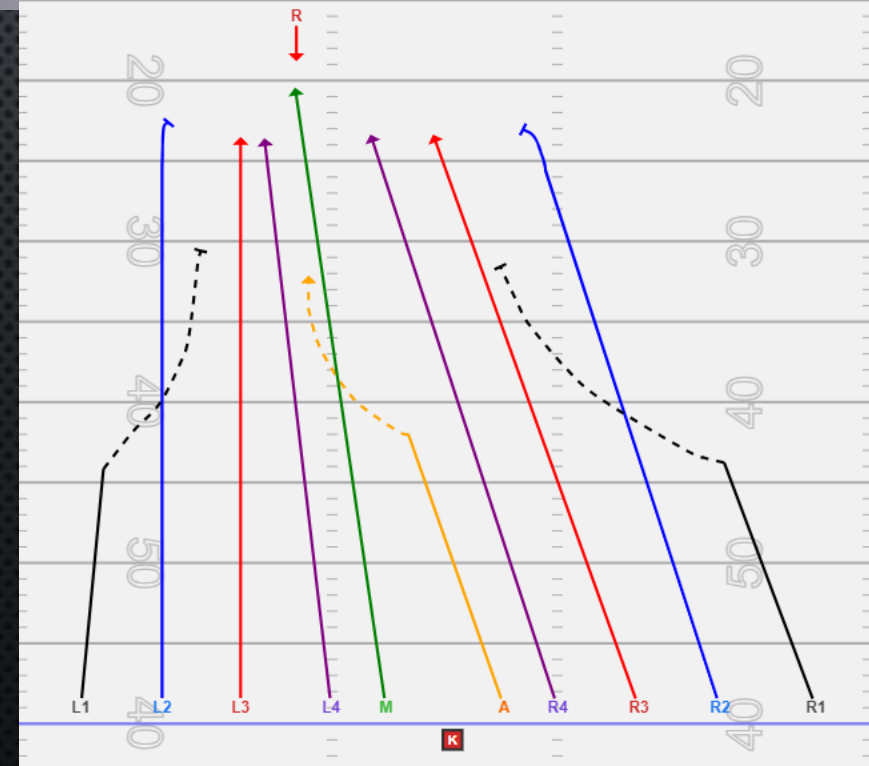
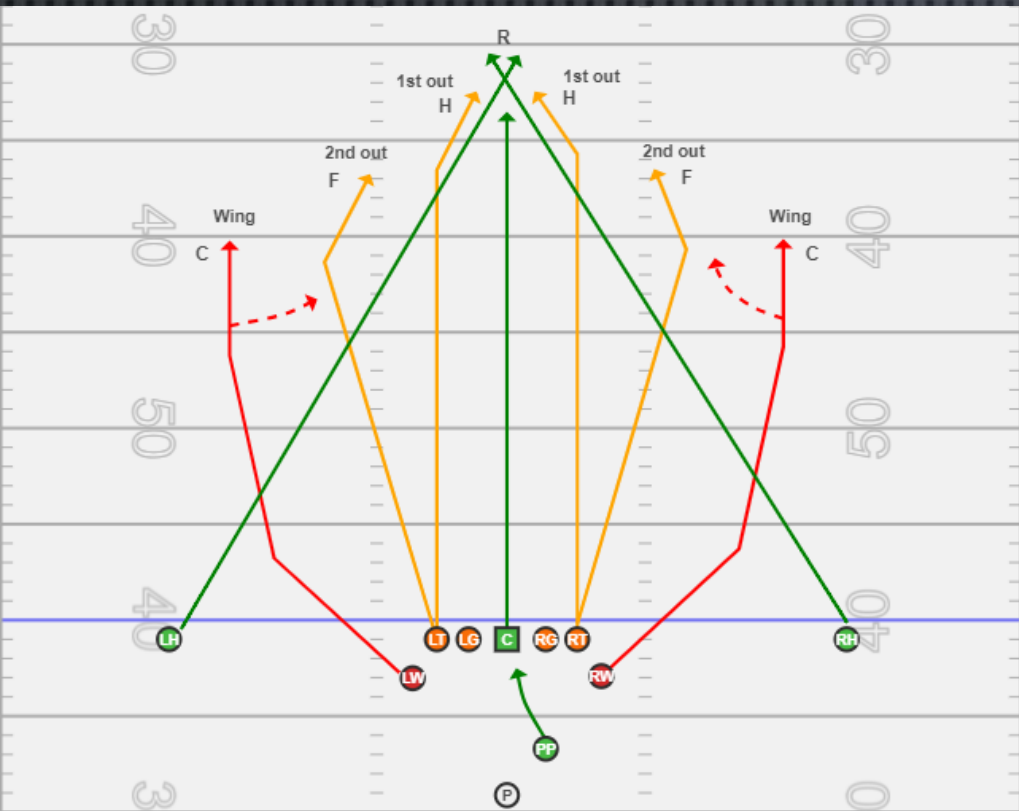
**YOU ARE HERE**



# COVERAGE SYSTEM

- We will have multiple levels to our coverage
- Our first players at the ball are the tip of the spear. Disrupt the returner and make him stop his feet.
- We will have multiple shoulder leverage players on each side. They must be able to make a play in either direction.
- The final wave of coverage will fit off their teammates and must be sure tacklers.
- The kicker or punter will be a safety and will also close the space to the ball to give himself an easier tackle

# COVERAGE SYSTEM



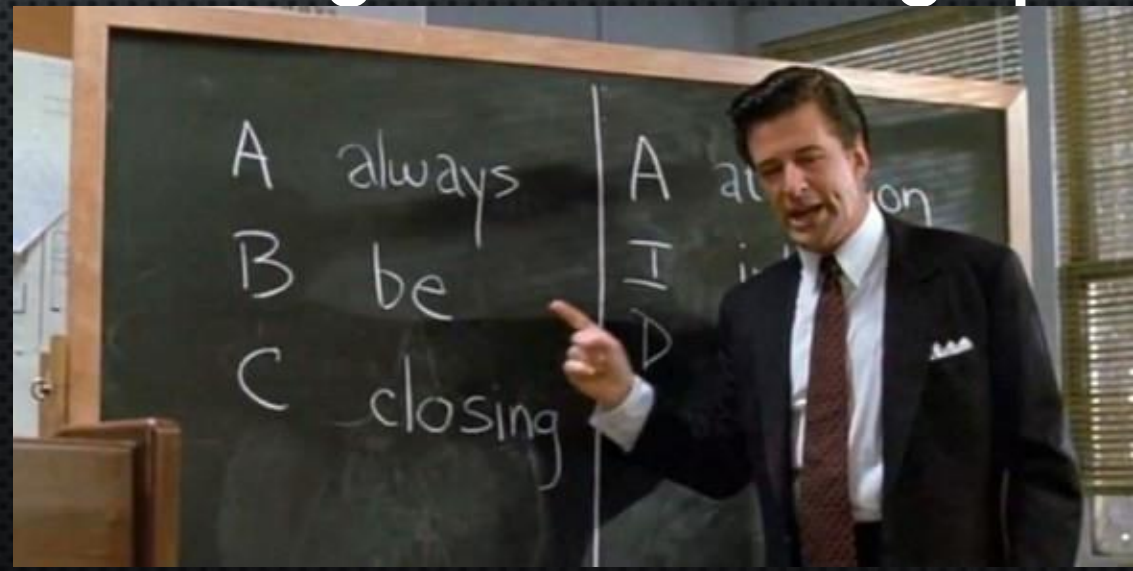
# COVERAGE PRINCIPLES: FINISH

- Returner facing you: 3-way go: shimmy.
- Returner NOT facing you: 1-way go. Full speed through his near hip. Possible wrap and roll tackle depending on spacing.
- No hopping / going off the diving board.
- Once a fair catch signal is made, no one on that team can advance the ball. All coverage players should immediately converge on the returner expecting a muff.
- Buzz the Tower: on a touchback, all coverage players cover through the goal line



# KICKOFF FIELD ZONES: SPEED ZONE

- -35 to the +45 (20 yards) (must align w/ 1 foot on the 30 YL)
- Take the line at FULL SPEED as one unit
- Use good running mechanics with eyes on your indicator
- Blockers are not usually trying to block you in the speed zone. Cover as much ground as fast as you can – close the space
  - You are in a race against the clock
- Recognize kick location, start to see blocking scheme setting up



# KICKOFF FIELD ZONES: AVOID ZONE

- From the +45 to about the +25 (20 yards)
- Identify blocker(s), confirm return direction
- Avoid butt-side and/or win with speed
  - Avoid with a running single (dip and rip to reduce your surface)
- Re-stack and cut the string
  - Cut the string: like there's a string from the blocker's back to the ballcarrier. Beat the block and cut the string – get between the blocker and the ballcarrier.
- Squeeze to the ball while maintaining shoulder leverage
  - Left side keep the ball inside – on your RIGHT shoulder
  - Right side keep the ball inside – on your LEFT shoulder
- \*Note: the avoid zone shrinks on a shorter kick

# KICKOFF FIELD ZONES: TACKLE ZONE

- From the +25 to the ball
- Continue to squeeze to the ball
- “Coming out of warp speed” – don’t run off the cliff
- When you encounter a blocker: make a full-speed decision!
  - 10 or less: power press
  - 15 or more: pick a door
- Interior players do not end up on the side of a block
- Take a shot – make the ballcarrier stop his feet. Penetration kills returns



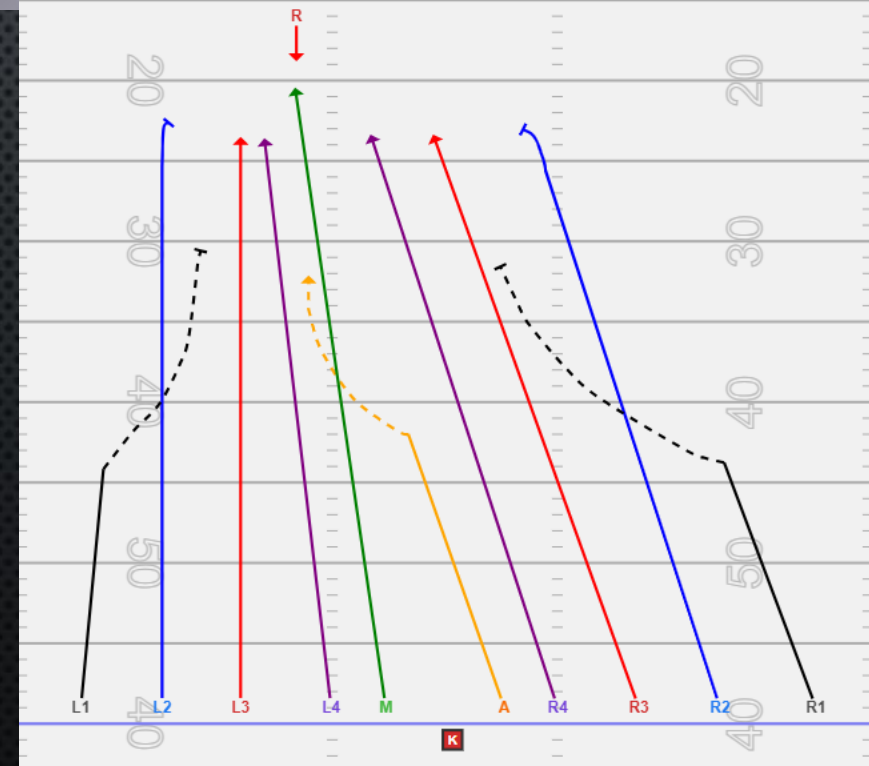
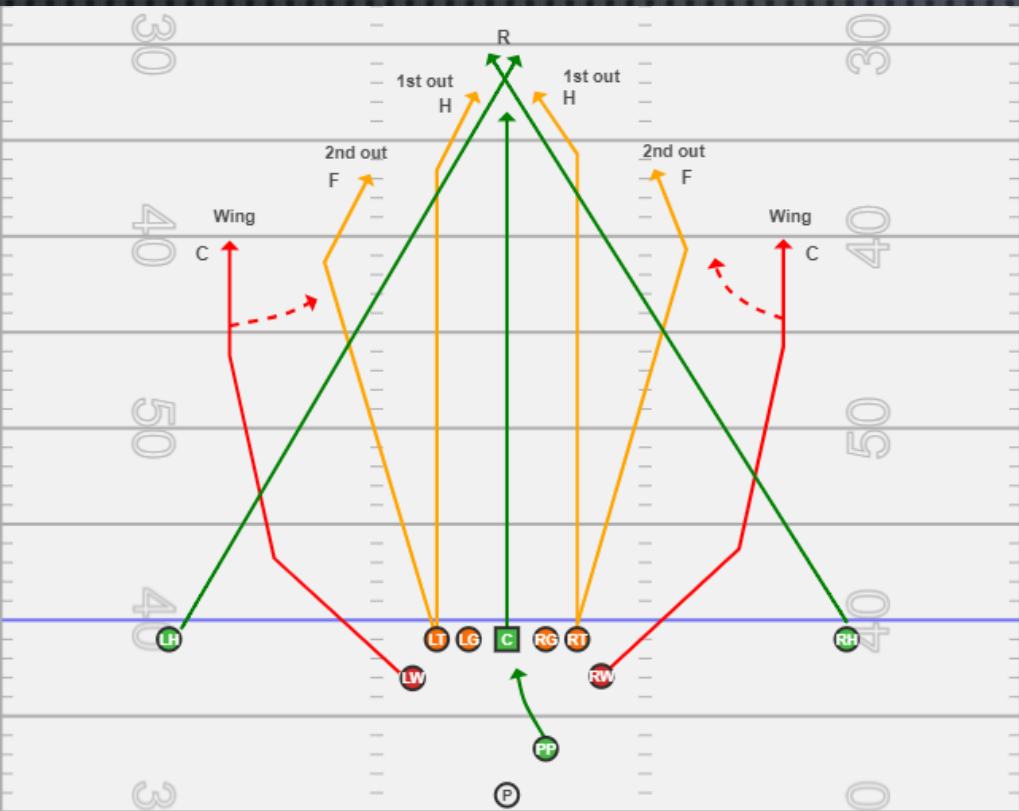
# BALL – BLOCKER RELATIONSHIP

- Coverage player is trying to “cut the string” between the ball and the blocker
- The return player is trying to keep “Ball-Me-Man” relationship





# COVERAGE SYSTEM

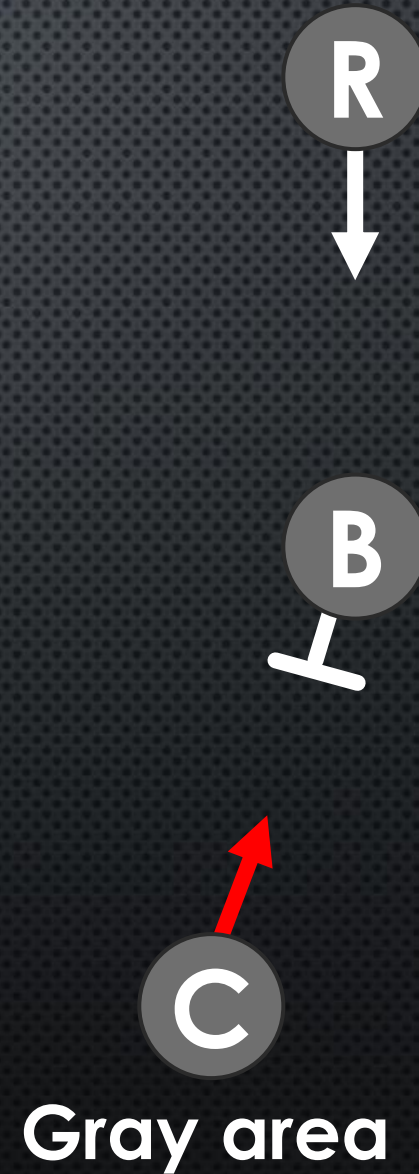
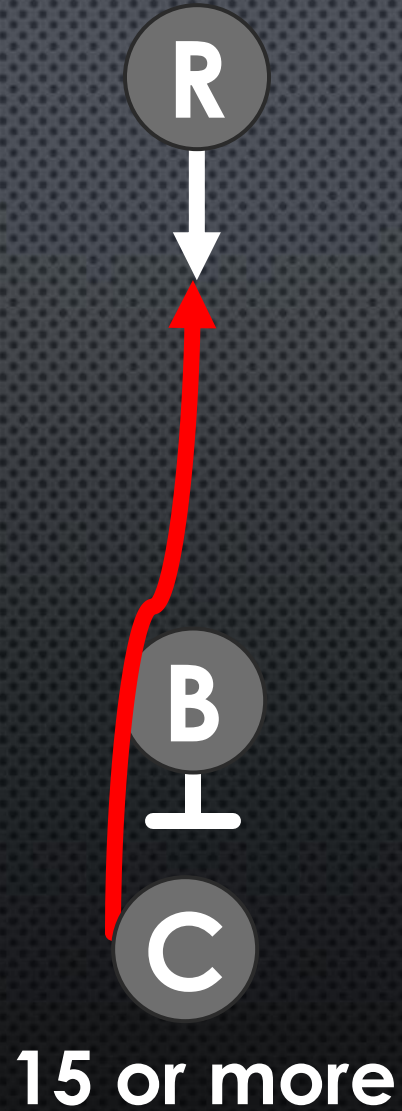
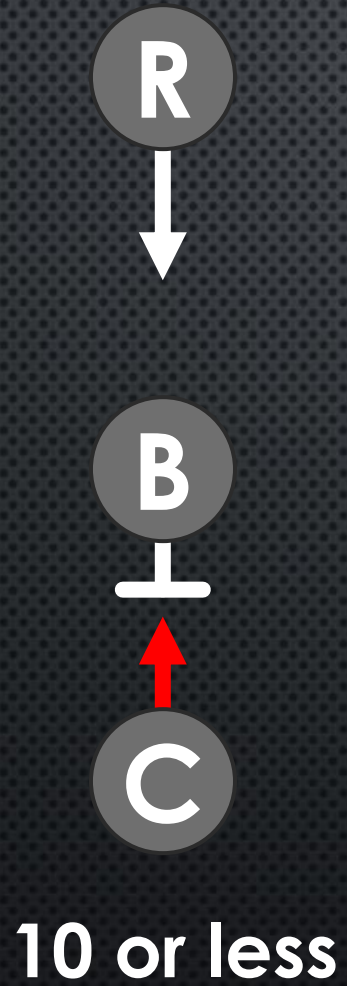


# BLOCKER/BALL DECISIONS

- 10 or less, power press: when you encounter a blocker within 10 yards of the ball, you need to power press and 2-gap. Keep narrow base and long stride length while you drive him back. The returner should feel like the world is collapsing in on him. Do NOT pick a side until the returner does.
- 15 or more, pick a door: when you encounter a blocker more than 15 yards of the ball, treat it like the avoid zone. Beat the blocker and redirect as necessary to keep your leverage
- \*Note: in general, it's later than you think – the ball will be on you sooner than later



# BLOCKER/BALL DECISIONS



# GROUP PRACTICE

- “Take the line” reps while scout team gets organized
  - Getoffs
  - Specialty kicks (squib, deep right, pop up, punt after safety)
- 2 Whistle Coverage
  - Get off with the kicker, cover on the returner
  - First whistle stop and make spacing adjustments
  - Second whistle continue and cover to the returner
- 4 on 4
- Half field variations (KO vs. KOR emphasis)



# GROUP PRACTICE

- “Run Fits”
  - Take the speed zone out of it – start halfway through the play in the avoid zone
  - Kickers working FG/XP, surprise onside, specialty kicks, tackling
  - Pros: better look, get a “perfect” kick every time, save legs, maximize reps
  - Cons: lose reps at reading return setting up, variables of poor kicks, etc.



# GAME WEEK

- **Tuesdays**
  - 5 minutes of FG/XP. During this period the KO team will do drill work or “run fits” vs. scouts
  - 5 minutes of full KO team vs. scouts
    - “Take the line” reps while scout team gets organized
    - Specialty (squib or surprise onside) in the middle of the reps to let everyone catch their breath
- **Thursdays**
  - 5 minutes full team work (same as above)



# KICKOFF SCHEME

- We will directional kick depending on what our kickers are able to do. Example we will major in deep left but try to kick deep right once or twice per game to mix it up.
- We will mix looks by using different alignments but asking players to do the same job.
- **Multiple waves**
  - Allow the first wave to play fast
  - Build in levels just like a run fit
  - 1<sup>st</sup> wave: 7 players
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> wave: 3 players
  - Safety: kicker



# FIRST WAVE: 7 PLAYERS

- **“Missile”**: head up on the RETURN (not kick location)
- **3 players on the left, 3 on the right**
  - **#2: Force**
  - **#3 & #4: shoulder leverage players**
- **Usually more physical guys to the kick side and faster guys opposite**
- **Disrupt and make returner stop his feet**





# FORCE PLAYERS

- **Ball at you: be ready to take on a back end or kickout block**
  - **10 or less: gladiator technique, set a firm edge, do not run off the cliff**
  - **15 or more: rip through the blocker, knife out the ballcarrier through his outside hip**
- **Ball away or up the middle (unblocked)**
  - **Run the hoop**
  - **Maintain shoulder leverage (do not allow the backdoor cut)**
  - **Roll tackle from behind**

# SECOND WAVE: 3 PLAYERS

- Sprint to at least the 50, then fold to get to your fit. Keep 6-8 yards of separation from the first wave. Do not cross the 30 until the ball declares. Fit where needed off the players in front of you. You still need to be making blocker/ball decisions.
- One folder from each side keeping shoulder leverage.
  - Ball to you: fit off your #2 and #3
  - Ball away: check for reverse or throwback, then work across the field as the TD-saver. Expect to have to make every tackle
- Adjuster: middle of the field, fit off the missile and #4s

# KICKER: SAFETY

- Kicker: safety. Do NOT wait – close the space to give yourself a chance. **MUST MUST MUST** get across the returner or blocker to get the ball to cut back to the pursuit. Do not let them get outside!



# OTHER CALLS

- **Pop-Up:** aim for the numbers at the 20-25 yard line. Shoot for 5 seconds of hang time.
- **Deep Squib:** hard ground ball kick down the middle of the field. We want it bouncing and difficult to field. It should be fielded inside the 25, as our coverage arrives. We can do this when kicking into the wind, to keep it away from a dangerous returner, or near the end of the game.
- **Surprise Onside:** middle dribble or chip shot over the front line. Depends on what the kicker's abilities are
- **Forced Onside**

# SITUATIONS: HAVE A PLAN FOR...

- Don't want to kick deep
- Kicking into the wind / with the wind
  - Windy day holder
- Kickoff after safety or penalty (-20 or 50)
- Last play / late in half or game
- How much time is left? What's the better matchup?
  - Your KO vs. their KOR
  - Your defense vs. their offense

**Kickoff Team Production Board**

**Base Sheet - Insert Names Here**

Snap Total: 0 Snap total should be 11 x the # of reps No Return:

Pts	Production	(Player 1)	(Player 2)	(Player 3)	(Player 4)	(Player 5)	(Player 6)	(Player 7)	(Player 8)	(Player 9)	(Player 10)	(Player 11)
	Total Plays											
Indy+	1 Assisted Tackle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy+	2 Tackle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy+	2 Tackle Inside the 20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy+	5 Great Effort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy+	1 First Hit on the Returner	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy+	3 Force Fumble	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy+	5 Recover Onside or Fumble	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy+	1 First One to Cross 20 Yard Line	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy+	1 Win One-on-One	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy	0 Draw One-on-One	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy-	-1 Lose One-on-One	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy-	-1 Technique Issue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy-	-2 Penalty	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy-	-2 Leverage Issue/Bad Miss Tackle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy-	-3 Missed Assignment/Mental	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy-	-3 Loaf	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indy-	-5 Critical Error	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kicker +	2 Touchback / FC inside -25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kicker +	3 Great Kick (Hang, Depth, Location)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kicker -	-5 Errant Kick	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Game	1 100% Assignment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Game	2 Net Average Goal (25 or inside)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Game	2 100% Possession	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pts		(Player 1)	(Player 2)	(Player 3)	(Player 4)	(Player 5)	(Player 6)	(Player 7)	(Player 8)	(Player 9)	(Player 10)	(Player 11)
	Total Plays	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Points	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Production %	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
	Negatives											

**Notes**

## Kickoff Notes vs.

### Scheme

What type(s) of return(s) are we most likely to see?

Which way do they return it / what determines their return side?

Kick location, their sideline, R/L

Will they bring it across the field?

Who is/are their indicator(s)? Front line vs. back end

Any counter, reverse, misdirection, trick plays?

Who do they double-team? How can we disrupt it?

Who is singled on the front side? Any opportunities to take advantage?

How do they handle mismatched kick location / return call?

Flip it, straight call, bring it across the field

### Personnel

Do they have an especially dangerous returner?

Position, experience, stats

Do we need to make a special effort to keep the ball away from him?

Do their returners freelance or hit the hole all the time?

Do they give any tells with their alignments and/or personnel?

Do they have any particularly good or bad blockers in the front line?

Are they vulnerable to a surprise onside or chip kick? Does their front line leave too soon? Do they cover the field well enough when the kick team tees it up on the hash?

Any O/D starters on their KOR unit?

# CONCLUSION

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